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A FEW

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AGONIZING

SPASMS

WRITTEN ABOARD THE U. S. S. ENTERPRISE DURING
THE CRUISE OF '95.

C. E. PERKINS.

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A FEW AGONIZING SPASMS.

MEMORIES OF THE CRUISE.

It was an August morning, on a hot, dull summer's day,
The training schoolship Enterprise was steaming on her way
To the shores of old New England, from far across the sea,
And many a lad of Boston thought, and wished that she could lay
Once more within her harbor, where he knew that she would stay.

For New York we were headed, although many miles from there,
And wished that we could see it through the hot and sultry air,
For the sun shone down with fearful heat upon all unshaded places,
And the boys walked round with blistered feet, and freckled, sunburnt
faces.

But little did we care, for we were homeward bound,
And soon would once more set our feet on good American ground;
Each knot was carefully counted, as it spun from off the reel,
And a careful watch was kept by the mate, upon the man at the wheel.

For three long months we've cruised around, among various foreign
climes,
And now we stop, and try to think of some of our many good times;
We think of Ponta Delgada, the first land that we made,
That Island in the Azores, where for a week or more we stayed.

We stop and think of Brown's Hotel, where for a while we got our feed,
And the opinion was unanimous, that it was very good indeed;
We thought we really owned the town, the days ashore we spent,
But I noticed that the most of the boys came back without a cent.

We think of the beautiful gardens, and the drives we used to take,
The curios we got from the natives, and the money they used to make;
From there we went to Malaga, that city in Sunny Spain,
And received our first batch of letters, and sent answers home again.

From there we rode to Granada, a hundred miles or so,
Though the distance there by railroad I don't exactly know;
The scenery was magnificent along the railroad line,
And in some spots in the mountains, the views were very fine.

At length we reached Granada, a party of thirty or more,
Although our little party consisted of only four,
Who stuck together all through the trip,
In every port, and aboard the ship.

There were Young, Ware, myself and Wells,
Who traversed the Alhambra up and down,
These are the four of whom history tells,
Who went together in that quaint old town.

Bought photographs of the Gypsy Prince,
(Which, by the way, I've not seen since)!
Stayed at the Washington Irving Hotel,
Where the service was good, as the boys will all tell.

The charges were not very extortionate,
And in dollars our bill was just thirty-eight
For three days board; 'twas not very bad
For us four boys, and the fun that we had.

We saw the Alhambra, that beautiful place
Where the Moorish Kings lived, and the last of his race,
Looking back from the hills, beheld in despair,
Ferdinand and Isabella entering there.

We noticed the frescoing, fine lattice, and tiles,
And thought with regret, of the time when, with smiles
The ladies looked out of their windows, and talked
With the King and his courtiers, as beneath them he walked.

We visited the prisons, and the Mayor we saw,
And picked up some points on old Spanish Law;
We spent all our money, but without a regret,
As its equal in value we never will get.

We next struck Gibraltar, that old English Fort,
Which now is a coal station, and more of a port;
We looked at the rock with something like wonder,
And imagined the time when all of the thunder

Of its thousand odd guns, torpedoes, and mines,
Would destroy a large fleet, and leave no signs;
We met the Alliance, and with some of her boys
Compared our lots. (They'd more sorrows than joys).

We next went to Tangiers, thirty miles or more away,
And as next day was the jolly fourth, to celebrate the day,
We dressed the ship at sunrise, fired a national salute at noon,
And whistled all the rest of the day. (Yankee Doodle was the tune).

We think of the boat races we had there,
And how our backs did strain,
After we reached the starting point,
And started back again.

We won them both, (we glory in that),
Although 'twas a very close race;
But the Enterprise lads showed the Alliance boys
How they used to set the pace.

From there we went to Madeira,
That island of world-wide fame,
And climbed the mountains, and tried the wine
Which obtains from there its name.

The swimming there was excellent,
We went in twice a day,
And thought it wrong that twenty minutes
Was all that we could stay.

To Santa Cruz then next we went,
And found it dull and hot;
Although we got it lively enough,
Ere back to ship we got.

For some of the boys got in trouble, and spent a few hours in jail,
Till they found a judge who was merciful, and listened to their tale;
The other watch did not get ashore, as the feeling against us was intense
On account of "the trouble in Cuba," and not at our expense.

We left the peak of Teneriffe behind, and started for Los Palmas town,
And caught a swell at early dawn, that pitched us up and down,
Rolled everything round about the decks, broke crockery and glass,
The steward's state-room got adrift, and broke everything to smash.

It took some time to get properly moored, but, we finally got it done,
And when we had everything secured, we started to have some fun;
We bought cigars by boxes, and bought the fruit by weight,
And some of us had the aches and pains on account of the stuff we ate.

We left there on the twenty-seventh, in the hot month of July,
And for two weeks had a spanking breeze, then it began to die.
We worked out our noon position, did practical work aloft,
Had sail drill every evening, (no need to have it so oft).

This week the breeze has failed us, it now is calm and hot,
And were it not for the "coffee mill," we'd stir not from this spot;
And naught is heard in the watches but now and then the sound
Of shoveling coal in the fire-room to make the screw go round.

They count the turns of the propeller, as it forces through the water,
And figure it out on paper, to make the distance shorter.
Our log is fouled with sea-weed, we cannot keep it clear,
And have to guess at the distance run, and seldom strike it near.

But see! a breeze has just sprung up; it ripples across the waves,
And cooling off the heavy air, our souls from misery saves.
And now a bark is sighted; she to the northward stands;
Who knows where she is going? And, coming from what lands?

And now the blackfish follow us, and play around the ship,
And stay perhaps a half an hour, and then away they skip.
Ah, how we boys do envy them, as in the cool water they play,
While we stay on deck in the broiling sun, and roast the livelong day.

Where do they spend their time all day? To what countries do they go?
And do they ever sleep at night? Does anybody know?
What mysteries the ocean would reveal, could we it penetrate;
Perhaps it will some day be done, at some far distant date.

But as we speed upon our way, the ripples past us flying,
We muse upon the past and think, as on the deck we're lying,
In one more week we'll be in New York, at least so the captain says,
And to go from there to Boston, will only take two days.

And then we'll be in Roxbury, where some of the boys will muse
On the many good times they had on the ship, on her

ANNUAL SUMMER CRUISE.

U. S. S. Enterprise, Lat. 26-16 N.—Long. 62-09 W. August 18, 1895.

Yours reverie-ently,

C. E. P.

CANNED LOBSTER.

The sun was setting in clouded skies,
As the boys on the training ship! “Enterprise”
Beheld on the table, with glad surprise,
Canned Lobster.

“Ah, ha,” they cried, “we’ll get a treat,”
“We’ve something for supper that can’t be beat;”
They sat down at once, and began to eat
Canned Lobster.

The next night it happened the very same way,
They thought the canned lobster had come there to stay;
But little they knew that they’d have every day
Canned Lobster.

It seems that the steward had "broke out" the hold,
And found amongst other things of which he'd not been told,
Large quantities of what seemed to be very old
Canned Lobster.

But now he had found it, what else could he do?
He couldn't throw it overboard, that's very true,
So he served every day (as it seemed to the crew)
Canned Lobster.

The supply seemed exhaustless, there were cases and cases,
And soon caused the boys to stop and make faces,
But the steward served up, till they swore like "blue blazes,"
Canned Lobster.

"Oh! give us a change," they cried, "something that's fried;"
But the steward was obstinate, and the more that they cried
More stubborn he grew, and the table supplied
with Canned Lobster.

They thought that the fish was bad, but the lobster was worse,
And some of their stomachs they now have to nurse,
And now when they see it they start in to curse
Canned Lobster.

Now, why wasn't this lobster found the first of the cruise?
If he'd served it out gradually 'twould have altered our views,
And caused them to like it, and not to refuse
Canned Lobster.

We seem to be shelling, and growing out claws,
And turning dark green, and cracking our jaws,
And when we feel sick, we now lay the cause
To Canned Lobster.

Written aboard the U. S. S. Enterprise, Lat. 30 N.—Long. 66 W.,
Aug. 20, 1895, and published by request (of the author) on June 7, 1897.

Yours in agony,
C. E. P.

A LIFE ON THE OCEAN WAVE.

A Journal is supposed to be a record of our thoughts,
But mine this year will chiefly be a record of our knots;
We're supposed to work all day and night, without a chance to sleep,
And then we're told we now will have three note-books more to keep.

From morn till night we scrub and paint, without a pause or break,
And hustle round, and bend our backs, as though 'twere life at stake.
At four we have a sail drill, at eight we have another,
And some of the boys are starting to sing "He longs for his home and
mother."

And if by chance we get a pause, and sit down for a smoke,
The fire-bell will begin to ring (but we can't see the joke).
No doubt the training is most excellent, and does us lots of good,
But some of the boys had rather be at home, and chopping wood.

With only four hours sleep at night, and plenty of work on deck,
No wonder the boys are thinking that "they're getting it in the neck."
Some boys who wished to be bold sailor lads, have now begun to falter,
And are thinking seriously of going home by steamer, from Gibraltar.

Although some of these are tourists, there still are quite a few,
Who came to study seamanship and navigation, too;
They see no chance of learning much while we have so little time,
Though opportunities may increase when we reach a warmer clime.

Not only in our watch on deck, but in our watch below,
We are always called for something, and away we have to go;
In our dog-watches we have fire drills, and expect them now at night,
And we rarely get time enough below to try and work out a sight.

And then we have "Abandon Ship," and "Send down the royal yard,"
And soon, I suppose, we'll "Rattle down," and the rigging will be
tarred.

Although we want the ship to be kept as trim and neat as wax,
From flying-jib to spanker-boom, from keelson up to jacks,

We still think we should be given time our studies to pursue,
Or in the fall exams. we won't know what to do.
With inspection so late in the morning, and work in our watch below,
It really is quite surprising to find how much we really know.

With three new note-books now to fill, and all our clothes to fix,
We think we ought at least to have from four P. M. to six.
At inspection every morning, our necks must all be clean,
And that is the wisest measure the ship has ever seen.

The inspection is more thorough than ever it was last year,
And God protect the cadet who's found with dirt behind his ear;
He'll be scrubbed with sand and canvas, till his neck is rosy red,
And matches in perfect harmony, the top of his shaven head.

If his undershirt is dirty, it is taken from him, too,
And must be scrubbed in the morning, and replaced by one that's new.
On Saturday we have a holiday, and our decks we holystone,
Till they look as white as canvas, when our morning's work is done.

We scrub our paint and canvas covers, and our paint-work soon looks
fine,
And then we tackle the bright-work, and work till we make it shine;
And next we go to breakfast, that is usually at eight,
But if our decks are much behind, we are liable to be late.

After we finish our breakfast we smoke for half an hour,
And then go down on the gun deck, and that we have to scour.
We do more work on Saturday than we do the day before,
But then you know it's a holiday, and we are able to do much more.

Now, I'm not much of a kicker, and seldom like to growl,
But when we're getting soaked so much, it's time to make a howl;
We like to do the work of the ship, and can stand a watch at night,
But we would like to have our watch below, to work out a morning
sight.

Though some of us are more fortunate, and have eight hours out of twelve,

There are so many new boys to teach that we have no time to ourselves,
If we could have less time for drills, and more for navigation,
We'd cheerfully do all that we were asked, to show our appreciation.

We do not think we ask too much, and hope that "the powers that be"
Will listen to our requests, even if we are afloat on the boundless sea.
Now, in writing out my tale of woe, I've put my thoughts in rhyme,
And hope you'll read them carefully, if you can spare the time.

If you think it strange that I am here, after the story I gave,
I tell you quite frankly, I always have liked

"A life on the Ocean Wave."

U. S. S. Enterprise, June 1, 1895.

Yours in trouble,

C. E. P.

A SAILOR BOY'S DREAM.

A meteor fell from the heavens on a starlight summer's night,
And sinking into the ocean, left a trail of golden light.
A ship sped over the ocean; a youth leaned on the rail,
And gazing up at the starlight, beheld the fiery trail.

A flood of thoughts came o'er him as he saw the falling star,
And gazing into the distance, his thoughts ran off afar
To the countless millions of twinkling glows
Arranged up above in numberless rows.

He thought of their origin, numbers, and size,
And how they illumine the whole of the skies,
He thought of the distance of each separate light,
Which for thousands of miles sends its radiance bright.

He wondered if there can be really a bound
To the oceans of space which our globe surround,
For how many miles do the heavens extend?
And is there a limit? And where is the end?

He gazed at the brighter ones, and wondered if they
Were worlds just like ours, then further away
He gazed at the fainter ones which the Milky Way filled,
And a desire to explore them his youthful mind thrilled.

As he leaned on the rail in his pensive mood,
He fell fast asleep, just there where he stood,
And from thinking of stars, and meteors bright,
He dreamed that he travelled among them that night.

He went first to the planets, Jupiter, Mars, and Venus,
And quickly had gained the distant Uranus;
And Saturn, and Mercury, and little Neptune,
And passed in his journey quite close to the Moon.

He found that the planets were peopled by races
Of men quite peculiar to those far off places,
And differing from us both in manners and speech,
With a higher development than we yet can reach.

He found there that darkness was a thing quite unknown,
And wherever he went a dim radiance shone,
Produced by no visible means that he found,
But seemed to be in the atmosphere, glowing around.

They never knew what crime was, and never did things wrong,
And instead of our rough language, expressed their thoughts in song.
They never toiled for riches, and never feared to die,
As the people live forever above us in the sky.

He found the oceans there above, were clouds of silvery light,
Which, trembling at the slightest sound, send out a radiance bright,
Illumining the darkness with a soft and pleasant glow,
Unknown to us poor mortals who are in this world below.

They travelled from here soon after death, and on that beautiful shore,
Of the silvery lake of starlight bright, would dwell forever more.
He found they were well aware of our existence here,
As they were spirits of those who died with souls and conscience clear,

His trip then took him to the stars which are scattered in the sky,
And which receive there, after death, the souls of those who die,
With hearts not worthy of the life such as he had beheld,
But who strived forever that life to reach, as they in stardom dwelled.

While dreaming of this journey strange he'd taken far and fast,
A change had taken place aloft, the sky was overcast,
The breeze blew fresh; his face was filled with a sudden dash of rain,
Which woke him up, and quickly brought him back to earth again.

He looked up at the swelling sails spread open to the wind,
And gazed astern, at the broad, white wake which trailed far out behind,
And he thought of his home so far away, on New England's rocky shore,
And as he took his trick at the wheel, he thought of his dream no more.

Peace be with you, my bold sailor lad, as you sail on the ocean wide,
May you always sail with a favoring gale, and never want for a breeze
To carry you safe o'er the foamy wave, on the waters rough and wild,
And may you think of this strange dream, which the hours of mid-watch whiled.

Who knows but what the dream is true, and that to the stars we'll go,
When we have finished what we have to do, in this wide world below,
If we do the work set out for us, and keep our records clear,
We may be sure of a home above, when we have ended here.

U. S. S. Enterprise, Lat. 29° 17' N.—Long. 63° 21' W., August 19, 1895,
Yours (with wheels),
C. E. P.

THE BEDBUG.

Who is it always is the same,
Since on the Enterprise he came,
And who they quickly gave the name

The Bedbug?

Who is it wears the clean white suits,
And a great big pair of rubber boots,
Till on the gun deck someone hoots?

The Bedbug.

Who is it always looking for fight,
And anxious for scalps both day and night,
No matter whether he's wrong or right?

The Bedbug.

Who is it rolls around the decks,
With fingers in the other boys' necks,
And face and clothing generally wrecks?

The Bedbug.

Who is it comes from Malden town,
For which he often gets called down,
And in cocoa his sorrow tries to drown?

The Bedbug.

Who is it fills you with surprise,
When'er he rolls those great red eyes,
And who into madness quickly flies?

The Bedbug.

Who is it smokes the whole long day,
And cigars innumerable gives away,
And in the steam launch likes to stay?

The Bedbug.

Who is it wears white hats so many,
And says he has not borrowed any,
But can't possibly own them all (now can he)?

The Bedbug.

Who is it wears a moustache light,
(In fact it's nearly out of sight),
And tries to coax it out at night?

The Bedbug.

Who is it bothers Hess so much,
That he can't walk without a crutch,
And carries on "to beat the Dutch?"

The Bedbug.

Who is it like a pirate swears,
And round the deck like fury tears,
Regarded by all with curious stares?

The Bedbug.

Who is it tears around the place,
Like a mule on the home-stretch of a race,
If you touch a blackhead in his face?

The Bedbug.

Who is it never from a blow would flinch,
And cannot be driven back an inch,
But cannot endure a good hard pinch?

The Bedbug.

Who is it on the deck does flop,
The minute his spirits start to drop,
And wants all fooling then to stop?

The Bedbug.

Who is it always swears so sweet,
In original oaths that can't be beat,
If you happen to touch his poor, sore feet?

The Bedbug.

Who is it like a Fiji yells,
When rolling round with Charley Wells,
Till the very air with horror swells?

The Bedbug.

Who is it will a friend stand by,
And looks around with rolling eye,
Till foes in terror from him fly,

The Bedbug.

Who is it chases you round the ship,
And a chance to hit you will never slip,
But will fight anyone else who gives you lip?
The Bedbug.

My friends, this verse will tell you how
He demolished the crowd in every row,
And instead of Spalding, they call him now,
The Bedbug.

On board the U. S. S. Enterprise, Provincetown, Mass., September
11, 1895. Yours insectivorously,
C. E. P.

A FOG AT SEA.

Reader, have you ever paced the deck, on a cold and drizzly night,
With the mist so dense, and the rain so thick, that you could not see
a light?

Have you ever paced the deck, I ask, with slow and measured tread,
And listened for the slightest noise, to break the silence of the dead?

A sad and dismal watch it is, and dreary as can be,
But these times come to every man who lives upon the sea.
A youth was pacing the deck of a ship, on just such a foggy night,
When he heard a steamer whistle, off in the darkness to his right.

'Twas only a low and distant wail, that a landsman would not hear,
But the youth stopped at once beside the rail, for he knew there was
danger near:

Intently he listened for another blast, to endeavor to locate the sound,
But except for the creaking of the mast, the silence was profound.

For several minutes he listened there, but all without avail,
He heard no noise but the breathing air, as it bellied out the sail.
He soon resumed his steady tread, concluding all was well,
When he heard the whistle dead ahead, and jumped at once for the bell.

He struck it twice, round after round, and listened for reply,
And still he heard that mournful sound, 'twas slowly drawing nigh.
Ah, you who live upon the land, in a quiet happy home,
Know little of what he has to stand, who on the sea does roam.

Of all sad sounds which you may hear, there is none so mournful quite,
As a steamer's whistle drawing near, on a dark and foggy night.
You hear it first in the distance far, a wailing, soft and low,
Slowly increasing in mournfulness, as towards the sound you go.

Soon it draws near, you hear it plain, but cannot see a light,
When suddenly it booms again, ahead, but out of sight.
But see! the fog is darkening there, upon the starboard bow,
And soon a shape looms through the air, we see her plainly now.

'Tis a large steamer homeward bound, with a half a thousand souls,
All unconscious of danger round, as on her way she rolls,
Soon she vanishes through the mist, and the whistle fainter sounds,
The youth, all cares and thoughts dismissed, resumes his weary rounds.

Such is the life a sailor leads, when a fog sets in at sea,
For he always knows how little it needs, to reach Eternity.

U. S. S. Enterprise, Buzzards Bay, September 9, 1895.

C. E. P.

RETROSPECTION.

Oh, where are the boys who were going to sea,
And strange countries were going to explore,
Who longed for the ocean, so wild, and so free,
And wished on the wild gale to soar?

They wished not for land, but bold tars would be,
And the American seamen restore,
And make Yankee ships the pride of their country,
And our flag send to each foreign shore.

They had found their profession, the sea they would choose,
No inducements would keep them ashore;
And in talking it over they'd fairly enthuse
All their friends who were backward before.

Can it be that they've changed in such a short season?
Are they not going to be sailors bold?
Do you think they were sea-sick? Can that be the reason
That their ardor so quickly grew cold?

Of all that brave number, whose future so bright
Seemed beckoning them onward to fame,
How many ambitions and wishes took flight,
When real sailor lads they became.

Do you think 'twas because they were asked to turn out
And work before breakfast each morn?
Or was it because they were thinking about
The maidens they left all forlorn?

Ah, well, we can't blame them, perhaps they are wise,
For the value they know of a home,
Since they took their first cruise on the old Enterprise,
And resolved in far countries to roam.

Perhaps they have found they're not always cadets,
And not always can do as they please;
Perhaps they are weary of curses and threats,
And the grandeur and night of the seas.

Notwithstanding their failures, their places are taken
By a new crowd of lads every year,
Who enter their life with a faith yet unshaken,
And of failure have never a fear.

We wish them all joys in the life that they choose,
But as we have all been there before,
We know a large number will, after their cruise,
Conclude to remain on the shore.

Boston, Mass., June 24, 1897.

C. E. P.

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